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Motorcycle Safety Tips

Riding in the Heat/Riding in the Cold

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Idaho is one of the most beautiful places in the country to ride – mountains, valleys, rivers, desert, forests, lava beds – we’ve got a little of everything. We also have a pretty long riding season so we can enjoy those beautiful roads most of the year. During that riding season, however, the temperature can run the gamut from well into the 100s to well below freezing.

Here are some tips for keeping your rides safe in extreme temperatures.

Riding When It’s HOT:

The Facts:

- **Hot weather drains your energy, so you will become fatigued more quickly**
- **Exposed skin will cause you to dehydrate more quickly than covered skin**
- **Fast moving air that is hotter than your body temperature will not cool you down**
- **Heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and even heat stroke are real possibilities and can be life threatening**
- **When a rider overheats, they start to lose both the mental AND physical skills they need to identify and deal with hazards**

The Strategies:

- **Take breaks frequently so you (and your passenger) can cool off in the shade or in an air conditioned room - and drink plenty of fluids**
- **Wear riding gear that covers your skin to reduce dehydration**
- **Consider wetting down your shirt under your riding jacket – this can work like a “swamp cooler” and keep you more comfortable**
- **Consider products such as “cooling vests” to keep your body’s core temperature down**

Riding When It’s COLD:

The Facts:

- **Cold weather drains your energy, so you will become fatigued more quickly**
- **Much of our body heat is lost through the head when it’s cold out. A helmet can not only provide comfort and injury protection, but can help you stay warm as well**
- **When a rider gets cold they can experience hypothermia – a condition that causes slowed mental and physical reactions, as well as the loss of smooth muscle control**

The Strategies:

- Take breaks frequently so you (and your passenger) can warm up in a heated area
- Wear multiple layers to help trap warm air close to your body
- Consider heated clothing (vests, jackets, chaps, socks, gloves, etc.) to fight off the cold (remember that unless you have your own source of heat – the cold will eventually win).

Watch for the signs of impairment – increased number and frequency of ‘surprises’ and loss of smooth motorcycle control. These signs tell you that your mental and physical abilities are being affected by the heat or cold and it may be time to slow down, take a break, or even park it for the day. Take care of yourselves out there. Stay cool in the heat; stay warm in the cold and enjoy the ride.

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